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Attribute this submission to: Chandra L. Mitchell

Organization (if applicable): No organization

Title of Hearing: Hearing on Responding to Long-Term Unemployment

I have been unemployed since June 26, 2008. I am 61 years old with 31 years of working at the same company before I was let go. I was terminated involuntarily after returning to work from three days in the hospital (TIA as a result of working conditions) and two weeks on disability. Three days after I returned to work, I received a phone call from my manager who lived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa saying I was terminated. On the day I was to return to work from a vacation day, I was admitted to the hospital. I had requested a vacation and had received an e-mail telling that I would be the only person packing books, binders and files for a departmental move to another floor and I complained. After all this time I still I am still in shock and wondering why I was terminated because I never got a satisfactory answer from management or Human Resources. The Human Resource Manager in Los Angeles mysteriously took early retirement about three months later and the firing manager was demoted out of management four months after I left.

The stress from thinking about not having the answers to why I lost my job, hoping I don't end up back in the hospital (blood pressure being high because since going to hospital I'm on blood pressure medication), thinking about having money to pay the basic necessities of life, being unemployed for this long and not being able to find a job keeps me up all night. During this time of not sleeping, I am on the computer checking my messages with the different job sites that I have registered, posted and sent my resume to and checking the unemployment job site that I had to register on (caljobs.ca.gov). I have seen the sun rise a lot lately. It's not healthy but what can you do when you have so much on your mind. And when I do get to sleep I wake up every two to three hours.

I started out in 1977 in the Word Processing Department and after two years promoted to an Executive Secretary with having working knowledge of word processing skills. I was also a senior transcriber (dictation from cassette) and with the title change in corporate America became an Administrative Assistant. In those days on the job training was the best training you could get from the older or more experienced workers in that particular department. In my recent experience in looking for employment today in the workforce seems like you don't need older workers with knowledge but younger workers with BA degrees or you have to be bi-lingual which I have neither. These jobs are not technical jobs but the same jobs I did when I started as Executive Secretary in Actuarial, Information Technology, Auditing and Contract Development. I didn't need a Bachelors Degree or speak another language except English (which was a must) but with working knowledge of the administrative skills and the opportunity, I was able to work in each of these different areas of one company.

On August 18, 2008 I attended the EDD Initial Assistance Workshop (IAW) which was supposed to provide me with reemployment services information. The service was supposed to help me plan my job search and shorten my time I remained out of work. Through this workshop I ended up attending Inglewood Community Adult School (WIA

Program) for math skill building starting on September 29, 2008 to November 20, 2008. My math skills were a little low after being tested and if I wanted to attend school through the WIA program and pass any entrance exam test I would have to upgrade my math skills.

At South Bay One Stop Business & Resource Center on September 2, 2008 I inquired about the SER's Senior Community Service Program (SER-JOBS FOR PROGRESS NATIONAL, INC), funded by the U.S. Department of labor on June 2, 2008. They focused on the needs of mature workers 55 years or more for unsubsidized jobs in the private sector through training in community based organizations. I met the age qualifications, the income qualifications and the resident of the county qualification but was told that I was overqualified according to my resume. They told me to leave my resume in case other opportunities came but have heard nothing.

I took advantage of the Workforce Incentive Act (WIA) training program being offered at the Resource Center and went to school for Medical Record Coder. It was a nine month course including a two week internship that ended up lasting a year (January 26, 2009 to January 31, 2010). During this time I used all my UI benefits and extensions. I was not advised upon signing up for this training program that it would be taking away from my regular UI benefits. My benefits were stopped and started four different times for a month at a time for phone interviews to verify going to school even though you could only go to an approved government WIA training programs. Now that I have finished the training and completed two weeks of internship, I found out that no one will hire you unless you have two years of prior experience and a certification (CCA or CCS) that cost around \$350.00 to even be considered for a job in that field. Money for school is advertised all over the media, e-mails and advertisements to change your career into a new growing profession which was supposed to be the Health jobs. But with no prior experience I can't apply for those jobs and I have wasted a year and half of UI benefits which includes the Workshop that I had to attend that led to the WIA training. After finding out about not being able to be considered for hire as a medical record coder, I started applying for jobs at my old profession as Administrative Assistant. I had one phone interview in response to an Admin job but never heard back from them.

I would have been out on the streets by now with my car repossessed and wouldn't be able to get to a job if it wasn't for the 4th Tier. The 4th Tier has saved my life thus far and a 5th Tier would help keep me from going from unemployed to homeless. When I signed up to go to school I didn't know I would be using up all my UI benefits. I am able, qualified and willing to work now. If jobs are coming back like they say they are, then why not have Tier 5 to give people the opportunity to continue to look for work. I have been crying, praying and sending out resumes. I don't sleep at night and when I do I wake up every two hours worrying about my situation that I was put in through no fault of my own. I am living on the bare necessities of life and soon I won't be able to afford them.

I AM SCARED. PLEASE HELP US.